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Welcome

A very warm welcome to this issue of RCN Students.

Inside, we look at proposed changes to nurse education (page 6), there’s a spotlight on dementia care (page 10) and on page 14 you can find out more about Sylvia Duval, who has recently joined me as a student member of RCN Council. On the back cover you’ll find a reader survey – please let us know what you think of the magazine and you could win an iPad mini.

I know many of you are experiencing severe financial hardship. With the general election now over, please encourage your MP to value nursing with an urgent review of bursaries. Write to them and make your views known about this vital issue.

Having met students from all over the UK and witnessed the passion and determination they have to complete a very challenging course, I am happy that the future of nursing is in good hands. There’s so much to be proud of. I hope to see some of you at RCN Congress being held in Bournemouth between 21 and 25 June.

Brendan Garry
Student member of RCN Council
RCN Students Committee Chair

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UK ROUND-UP

Working together

The RCN Students Committee has been elected to Associate Membership of the National Union of Students (NUS). As a result, two members of the committee took part in the NUS National Conference in April. The NUS will be attending RCN Congress and participating in the students programme when the Students Committee, NUS and the student unions will talk to nursing students about how they could work better together to improve support for them.

Cavell winner

Deborah Cooper, an RCN student information officer, has won the Cavell Nurses’ Trust Outstanding Student Nurse Award. The trust is named after Edith Cavell, the First World War nurse executed in German-occupied Belgium 100 years ago. Every year the trust honours exceptional nursing and midwifery students. Award winners receive funding to study abroad, and Deborah is hoping to study transplantation and nursing research.

The awards were sponsored by the RCN Foundation and presented by Princess Anne (pictured with Deborah).

FGM resource

The RCN has launched updated guidance for members on female genital mutilation (FGM). It highlights some of the ways of tackling FGM and the education of the public and health care workers to raise awareness. Download Female Genital Mutilation: An RCN Resource for Nursing and Midwifery Practice from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

New toolkits

The RCN, in collaboration with Public Health England (PHE), has launched toolkits to help nursing staff understand mental health issues in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sexual orientation and identity in young people. You can download Preventing Suicide Among Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Young People and Preventing Suicide Among Trans Young People from www.gov.uk

Do you want to be published?

RCN Students is your magazine and we rely on your ideas to shape content. Have you got an experience you’d like to share with fellow nursing students? The editor is always keen to receive article submissions. Your work could be read by more than 40,000 nursing students. Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk
Code alert

A new Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) code now governs standards of practice for nurses and midwives.

When nursing students become registered they will be bound by the standards laid out in The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives. It’s built around four principles: prioritising people (see page 13), practising effectively, preserving safety and promoting professionalism and trust. It says registrants must raise concerns immediately whenever they encounter situations that put patients or the public at risk.

The new professional code will be central to revalidation, the three-yearly checks on registrants being introduced by the NMC next year. Revalidation will be the way in which nurses and midwives demonstrate to the NMC that they continue to practise safely and effectively, and can remain on the register. Visit the NMC website for more information: www.nmc-uk.org/the-code. Watch a short RCNi film at http://bit.ly/1MxGmRm

Raising concerns

Nursing students now have the same level of legal protection as registered nursing staff if they suffer a detriment as a result of raising concerns.

This extension in protection comes in the wake of Sir Robert Francis’ Freedom to Speak Up review which Sir Robert carried out following his report into poor care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. RCN student members played a role in helping shape the review when they met with Sir Robert late last year to share their experiences of raising concerns.

Ready, steady, go

The biggest nursing event of the year is just around the corner. Free to attend, RCN Congress is taking place in Bournemouth between 21-25 June

The student programme on Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 June is available for all nursing students from across the country. The four interactive sessions run on both days, so whether you can attend for one day or two, you can choose the sessions which suit you best. Self-care and resilience, wound management and the new NMC code are some of the topics which will be covered. From debates and seminars to exhibitions and speakers, Congress is an opportunity for you to have your voice heard. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/studentsatcongress. If you haven’t already booked, don’t worry – just register on the day.

Virtual presence

Don’t miss out. If you can’t be there in person, there will be live Twitter feeds during all debates, and the Congress website will be updated with news and videos. Follow @theRCN and use #RCN15. And why not become a fan of the RCN Facebook page at www.facebook.com/royalcollegeofnursing
Suppose that you’re an adult-branch student on a busy general ward and someone is admitted with obvious mental health issues. How well equipped would you be to meet that person’s needs? Or, if you have chosen to specialise in learning disabilities, are you confident in your ability to recognise and manage a client’s physical symptoms?

A report published by Health Education England (HEE) suggests that the existing four branches of pre-registration education do not always prepare students to care adequately for the spectrum of needs likely to arise in patients and clients.

The report, part of the Shape of Caring review commissioned by HEE – in partnership with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), which gives the review UK-wide significance – says nurse education needs to develop practitioners who are better equipped to provide whole-person care across a range of settings.

The reason is that health and social care needs are changing. More people are living longer, but often with multiple long-term conditions. The focus of nursing practice is also shifting. The growing emphasis on care nearer to home means that community nurses and those in GP practices will require a broader range of skills. “Nursing roles need to be defined and commissioned around the needs of patients rather than the traditional role of specialising,” the report says.

The solution, it suggests, may lie in a new model of training known as “2+1+1”, which puts greater emphasis on the “whole person”. Two years of core training would be followed by one year in a chosen specialism and a year’s preceptorship.

Negative attitudes?

Rebecca Richards, due to graduate as a mental health nurse from Plymouth University later this summer, can see the benefit of more shared training. Attitudes towards mental health in general settings “are not always positive”, she says. But equally she acknowledges potential
A new report proposes a more flexible approach to nurse education, with greater emphasis on shared learning. Daniel Allen reports.

What do you think? Email us at students magazine@rcn.org.uk

shortfalls in her own ability to manage clients’ physical conditions. “I feel a bit out of my league sometimes.”

Is the 2+1+1 model the answer? Not necessarily, she says. “The issue for me would be that those two years could be very heavily focused on physical health.” One year studying the complexities of mental health conditions and, for example, the medications used to treat them would be insufficient, she suggests.

Brendan Garry graduated from the University of the West of Scotland and now works at Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Trust in London. His adult-branch programme was good, he says, and touched on many different areas including mental health and learning disabilities, although more on both would have been welcome. “But I was lucky in that I had very varied training. I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

The community component was strong and he also worked as a health care assistant while he was training, which broadened his exposure to a wide range of patients and conditions. And while the detail of the 2+1+1 model clearly needs to be developed, like Rebecca, he can see that it offers advantages, in particular a more holistic understanding.

Brendan supports the Shape of Caring proposal that all newly registered nurses should be offered a year of “robust” preceptorship. He says: “There’s a very strong preceptorship programme where I am but I know on the whole arrangements are a lot looser.”

The RCN responded to the report’s publication by saying it should be used to kick-start a lively and important debate. The NMC is currently considering standards for nurse education and the Shape of Caring review will form part of that process, but there’s a long way to go before any of the 34 recommendations are enacted. If you’re part way through your education, you’re unlikely to be affected. But as the profile of patient need continues to shift in the years to come, the experiences of your student successors may be markedly different from your own.
Turning lives around
Third year nursing student Louisa Power writes about an RCN campaign helping to tackle health inequalities in Scotland

Ros Moore, former Chief Nursing Officer for Scotland, recently stated that “the way forward is by building on our traditions, not relying on them”. I think RCN Scotland’s campaign Nursing at the Edge embodies this perfectly.

I first heard about the campaign through my role as an RCN student information officer (SIO). It aims to raise awareness of the damaging long-term effects health inequalities pose to our society while inspiring innovative practice to tackle them. It also seeks to challenge the Scottish Government, local authorities and NHS boards to provide adequate funding to reduce disparities in health.

Nursing at the Edge features the work of a number of nurses leading exciting services. Their driving force is clear: they want to act as advocates for their patients and challenge the source of health inequalities, not just the symptoms. What inspires me as a nursing student is that these individuals are lateral thinkers and this is exactly what we need to challenge the status quo.

High profile

I was lucky enough to attend the Scottish Parliament and meet some of the nurses behind the case studies and listen to patients who have benefitted from their care. During the presentation, one of the nurses raised the issue that some people might find it too challenging working with individuals living with substance abuse or mental health issues. However, she saw it as a privilege to support and care for the most vulnerable members of our society. I thought this was an inspiring example of compassionate care – a key component of nursing excellence.

I’d urge all students to check out the case studies on the RCN website. These individuals are game changers and demonstrate what can happen if you start thinking outside the box. And make sure to sign the petition to help turn around health inequalities. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/nursingattheedge

Turn to page 18 to find out more about becoming an SIO.
Change of heart
One student’s innovative idea is improving health outcomes for people living with chronic cardiac disease in Northern Ireland

During a practice placement in a cardiac unit, third year nursing student Elizabeth Treacy (pictured in white) was struck by a simple but effective idea to improve patient care.

“It was only my second shift and a patient died following a cardiac arrest,” says Elizabeth.

“I spent a long time with the family afterwards who said they felt they didn’t know enough about the symptoms and signs of heart failure.”

After checking that nothing similar existed, Elizabeth set about creating a patient education pictorial leaflet and alert card in consultation with patients and relatives to provide information on heart failure and highlight the importance of managing fluid intake. “It helps people identify symptoms early on and promotes self-management,” explains Elizabeth. “Meanwhile, the alert card assists patients who may have difficulty explaining their condition, stating who needs to be contacted should symptoms become exacerbated.”

A valuable document
Elizabeth’s trust consulted patients on the usefulness of the leaflet and it is now given out at the cardiac unit at South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, and is being considered for use on other wards. “It’s a valuable document for patients to take home and is a platform to talk about things in a holistic way. It gives patients autonomy and the ability to manage their own care,” says Elizabeth. “My tutors offered me amazing encouragement – they call us nursing students ‘change shapers’ as we are in a unique position to take a step back with a fresh pair of eyes. If we spot an idea for improvement it’s so important we find the courage to speak up about it.”

Elizabeth has recently designed another leaflet to support nursing staff in other challenging clinical areas. “My mind is whirring with ideas – I can’t stop new ones popping up. If I see an opportunity, I want to get stuck in and do something about it,” she adds.

Elizabeth won the Student Award in the 2015 Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards in May. Nominations are open until 25 June for this year’s RCN in Wales Nurse of the Year Awards. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/wales
THE VIEW FROM HERE

Dementia care
Faith Vargas writes about dementia and the positive difference nursing students can make to people living with the condition

I remember sitting in the baking sun in southern France on a family holiday. I was no more than 10 years old, my head buried in the pages of a book written by the late Sir Terry Pratchett (pictured), *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents.*

This was the first book to ever make me laugh out loud and was the beginning of my passion for reading good stories. That book is still sitting on my shelf, its pages tattered from the amount of times it’s been re-read, and crinkled from being dropped in the bath and placed on the radiator.

Some years ago now, Terry Pratchett revealed to the public that he had been diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease, a form of dementia. At the time I hadn’t yet started my nurse education and having little concept of the disease and what it meant, my first and most selfish thought was “Oh no! Does that mean no more books?”

Losing memories

Now, all these years later, I have witnessed first-hand the cruelty of this confining disease. I’ve seen countless patients living with dementia and I honestly can’t imagine anything more devastating. To find every day that another memory has slipped away, whether that is the location of your house keys, or the name of your eldest grandchild.

Being a nursing student on the ward has its advantages. As a supernumerary member of staff, it has often been my privilege to sit with patients who have dementia when they are agitated or confused, and listen to them talk about their past with such vivid detail, even though they can’t remember who I am, or where they are.

In many ways, dementia is relentless. It is unavoidable, it cannot be cured or prevented, and perhaps this is what makes it so frightening. Terry Pratchett said: “It is like I have two diseases, one is Alzheimer’s and the other is knowing I have Alzheimer’s”. But the question in my mind is, does it have to be like that?

Because I don’t think it does. I know there is currently no cure for dementia, and I’m not trying to be unrealistically optimistic, and tell people this disease isn’t really all that frightening, because it is. But I don’t think having a dementia diagnosis, whether that be Alzheimer’s or another form of the condition, means that life cannot be lived, experienced and loved.

Terry Pratchett was an inspiration in many ways, because he showed people that having Alzheimer’s doesn’t mean living in the past, but that there is also a future where you can achieve wonderful things. Pratchett also proved me wrong entirely. I thought his diagnosis would mean no more books, but he went on to write quite a few more and his words had me laughing out loud just as they did when I was young.

I’m not saying that as nurses we can help all people with dementia to write a novel, or go sky-diving, or learn to salsa. But surely we can help them achieve other things that are even more important to them. Like writing a letter to a friend, or knitting a scarf, or even buttoning their shirt independently.

The RCN website has a wealth of resources about caring for people who have dementia. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/dementia

I’ve seen countless patients living with dementia
The topic of dementia has been highlighted by the media and has been at the forefront of discussion within the health profession for some time now. Yet it somehow feels as though things are just beginning in terms of the potential for the direction of nursing roles in dementia care. Maybe this is the start of a revolution, maybe it’s a lot of hype that will blow over with time. Personally I hope the first, because in the words of Pratchett himself, “Sometimes it is better to light a flamethrower, than curse the darkness”.

Terry Pratchett had Posterior Cortical Atrophy (PCA) – a specific and less common type of Alzheimer’s disease that affects the back of the brain, the occipital lobe.
Good manners

How can we ensure a harmonious relationship between patient and nursing student? First year Stefan Franks ponders the question

A good bedside manner is one of the most important qualities a nursing student can develop. And treating each and every patient in your care as an individual is a key part of it.

It’s rather like being remembered by name at your favourite restaurant. It makes patients feel special – and this in turn may help their recovery. All nursing staff are busy and pressured, but taking a little time to get to know your patients and their personal preferences is invaluable in building a rapport with them.

Everyone is different. For instance, while some patients are happy to be on first name terms with nursing staff, others prefer to be called by their title. I recently called a patient by his first name before a procedure, assuming it would help to put him at ease. But I could tell from his expression that he would have felt much more comfortable if I had used his title.

The best course of action is to check the patient’s notes and follow this up by asking them if they prefer to be called John or Mr Smith. Now, I always take the time simply to ask them: “What would you like to be called?”

A hospital ward can be a hectic environment, but you can discover so much just by being observant. Looking around the patient’s bedside area is a great way of finding clues to help engage with them. For instance, if I am caring for a child with a teddy bear, I make sure to ask their teddy’s name.

I remember a nurse colleague asking a patient about a photograph which was displayed at her bedside. A black and white image of a beautiful woman at a theatre wearing a dazzling sequin dress, it turned out to be the patient herself. The subsequent conversation between nurse and patient brought much laughter and joy to both, and it helped to make the patient’s experience less institutional and more individual.

Listening can be a challenge in a busy
Good manners

How can we ensure a harmonious relationship between patient and nursing student? First year Stefan Franks ponders the question.

Try listening and talking at your patient's level, remembering to use eye contact. Ask carers, family members and friends to help you understand their loved one's needs, when patients are unable to express those needs for themselves.

Forward thinking

As a nursing student, I've quickly discovered how forward thinking can help to keep everything efficient and organised. On the ward, I always like to make sure drinks are topped up. If I see an empty glass, I'll refill it. If a patient is unable to reach a meal and struggling to eat it, I will offer assistance. I think anticipating people's needs is fundamental to a good bedside manner.

Stephanie Aiken, RCN Head of Education, says: “A good bedside manner is one way for a nurse to show their commitment to providing safe and effective person-centred care. It also demonstrates they are acting in line with the new NMC code which has ‘prioritising people’ as one of its four key principles.”

Fundamentals of care

The new Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) code states that registered nurses must “treat people as individuals and uphold their dignity.”

To achieve this, you must:

• treat people with kindness, respect and compassion
• make sure you deliver the fundamentals of care effectively
• avoid making assumptions and recognise diversity and individual choice
• make sure that any treatment, assistance or care for which you are responsible is delivered without undue delay, and
• respect and uphold people's human rights.

Download the full code from the NMC website: www.nmc-uk.org/the-code

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As the nurses of the future, we must foster qualities of empathy, compassion, respect, trust and clear communication. We must be sensitive to the needs of our patients by listening to their fears, concerns and anxieties. Simply smiling and showing an interest really counts. A good bedside manner is not only reassuring for patients, it is crucial in creating a more harmonious and holistic relationship between patient and nursing student.
The gold standard
Sophie Lowthian talks to RCN student member Sylvia Duval about her position representing nursing students across the UK

Sylvia Duval is a nursing student with a mission. As the most recent student member to join the RCN’s governing Council, she is dedicated to raising the profile of nursing and enhancing the student experience for everyone.

“The way I see it is, if you put rubbish in, you get rubbish out,” says Sylvia. “If students aren’t properly looked after during their education then it will have an impact on the quality of care and society will suffer.

“People say nursing is important but it’s more than that, isn’t it? Everything in life depends on health and wellbeing and students need to be well-equipped for the years to come.”

An important role

RCN Council is responsible for shaping the vision of the organisation and for the overall governance of the RCN. There are 31 members, with Sylvia holding one of the student seats alongside Brendan Garry whose term of office ends this December.

Sylvia admits that starting out in the position made her feel a little nervous. But it’s a role that excites her and one she takes very seriously. “I hope that in my role I can help my peers feel they have someone who understands them and provides a platform to voice their views,” she says.

A self-confessed lover of statistics and strategy, Sylvia was in the middle of a management degree when she realised that nursing made more sense to her as a career for life. “It was while working as...
a health care assistant to help fund my degree that I discovered my passion to look after people.”

Choosing a specialty

When she began researching a career as a nurse, Sylvia, now a second year learning disability nursing student, discovered the area of nursing that captured her heart. “I was alarmed by the bad press at the time regarding care for people with learning disabilities. I thought, why should a person with a learning disability not get the same care as everyone else? Everyone has one life to lead and everyone should be given the opportunity to reach his or her potential.”

When asked about the difficulties facing this specialty, Sylvia shakes her head. “I’d like there to be more and better training across the board and better access to specialist support. We also need to see an increase in commissioning for learning disability nursing places so people get the specially-skilled staff they deserve.”

Being prepared

Sylvia is keen to stress how important it is that all students are aware of learning disabilities. “Everyone will have contact with a person with a learning disability at some point in their career. It is sometimes hard for people to express what is wrong with them, and we need the skills and knowledge so we can be there for whoever comes through the door.”

While Sylvia cares passionately about learning disability nursing, she is deeply committed to the issues affecting all nursing students. “Placement support, mentorship, bursaries. These are just a handful of the areas that need looking at. There is a lot to be done to ensure the nurses of the future are the best we can be,” says Sylvia. But she is optimistic about what can be achieved if students pull together.

“Each student has the potential to change the future of nursing and we should never be afraid to challenge the status quo,” she adds, with a glint in her eye.

“Let us always aim for the gold standard. We must not tolerate slow processes – if change is required, let it be done.”

Resources for you

The RCN has produced guidance to support nursing staff and students who are trained in other fields to deliver high-quality care to people with learning disabilities. Download Meeting the Health Needs of People with Learning Disabilities from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Join the RCN Learning Disability Nursing Forum at www.rcn.org.uk/forums

An opportunity

Feeling inspired? In elections opening during RCN Congress, students can stand as a student member of Council or for a seat on the students committee (see page 23). Look out for details at www.rcn.org.uk/elections
Hope and resilience
Rachel Nutt Lamp was moved by the strong community spirit she discovered while on placement in Bhopal, India

It has been 30 years since 27 tons of toxic gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, India. The Bhopal Medical Appeal states that half a million people were exposed to the gas and 25,000 have died to date as a result of their exposure.

Sambhavna Clinic was set up in response to this tragedy, providing free health care to nearly 45,000 people directly affected by the gas leak or the ongoing contamination from the accident. Sambhavna uses a combination of approaches including Ayurveda, an indigenous form of medicine using massage, medicinal plants and yoga. They grow their own plants on an acre of land and the treatment has been found to be particularly helpful when dealing with chronic conditions. This is used as an alternative or in addition to Western medicine, which has proven to be useful in some of the more acute phases of illness.

Fateful night

Bhopal is regularly referred to as the world’s worst industrial disaster. Constant reminders of that fateful night abound in the form of gynaecological abnormalities, serious respiratory illnesses and congenital deformities to name a few. I hoped that I would be
They grow their own plants on an acre of land.

They grow their own plants on an acre of land.

able to use my nursing skills to make a difference, no matter how small.

As nursing students we are required to practise holistically and I thought Sambhavna’s integrative approach to health care would provide the perfect setting in which to do so.

During my month at the clinic I worked alongside a wonderful nurse named Shabnam, who was herself a survivor of the tragedy. As in the UK, it was important to act as a support and a confidant to those in need. I was concerned that my basic grasp of Hindi would make this a challenge, potentially limiting my learning and ability to provide good quality care.

I used a range of communication strategies including hand gestures, a few useful Hindi phrases and Shabnam’s interpretation.

My understanding of non-verbal communication, taught in my first year at the University of the West of England, helped me to go some way to meeting the emotional and practical needs of patients. An example of this was when a lady receiving some IV fluids looked noticeably cold. We made signs with our hands to establish that she would like an extra blanket. When she still found it difficult to warm up Shabnam decided to start a fire, using the waste paper basket to contain it – so typical of the resourcefulness of the people I encountered.

Although confidentiality is a basic tenet of the Western health care ethos, it appeared to be of very little importance to the patients who attended the clinic. It was not unusual to be taking the blood pressure of one person while another patient on a nebuliser looked on. In the meantime three more family members were having a natter while somebody was preparing to have an electrocardiogram (ECG) behind the curtain. This is indicative of the strong community spirit among the people of Bhopal and likely influenced by their social situation; privacy can be difficult to maintain when living in close quarters, as many in Bhopal do.

Prior to my placement I anticipated scenes of great sadness and tragedy. I was expecting to encounter ailments and illnesses that I would never be exposed to here in the UK. Although these realities were evident, my overwhelming experience was one of hope, resilience and kindness in the face of extraordinary circumstances.

To find out more about the Sambhavna Clinic, the Bhopal disaster or to donate, visit Bhopal.org
Visit www.rcn.org.uk/international for RCN advice on travelling abroad.

Did you know?

The Cavell Nurses’ Trust offers several scholarship prize funds to be used for placements either abroad or in the UK. They open for their fifth year on 1 September 2015. To pre-register, visit http://bit.ly/awardsprereg
Stand out from the crowd
Become an RCN student information officer and develop experience ready for that all-important first nursing job

A student information officer (SIO) is a student member of the RCN who acts as a two-way link between the RCN and the nursing and midwifery students at your university. They make sure students get the most out of their studies while simultaneously getting the best support in their own education.

As an SIO you will receive up-to-date information on UK-wide nursing issues, have access to specialist groups and gain more awareness of the support available to members. You will support your peers and help the RCN improve its student services and activities.

Let your class know about student events. Tell them how to access the RCN library and archives for that vital reference for assignments. Make sure that all student members are aware of what their annual £10 membership fee gets them.

It’s a way to get more involved and help support your colleagues without having to take vast amounts of time away from your studies.

“I feel that being an SIO has given me an additional passion for nursing and helped keep my level of enthusiasm up. It has also helped me realise that you can challenge things and change things for the better.” Hannah

“As an SIO you get the chance to network with staff and students from all over the UK and participate in a variety of activities.” Emma

“Since I became an SIO I’ve attended training days and been to a number of local learning events. It’s a great way to get stuck in with all sorts of opportunities.” Deborah

Read more and complete the short application form at www.rcn.org.uk/sio. Don’t forget to get another RCN student member to sign it before you put it in the post.
The RCN offers you a range of resources to help you succeed on your course and assist you on your journey to becoming a registered nurse.

- Online access to a goldmine of information, through the RCN e-library 24 hours a day, which is an invaluable resource, especially if you are away from your university facilities on placement.

- Access to a range of nursing e-books and e-journals. Browse and download the content immediately – when you need it.

- Fast and easy access to over 1,000 full text e-journals, not just the abstract.

- Online guides to search and evaluate quality evidence.

- View and print online articles or save to use at a later date. Receive photocopies by post.

- Round the clock use of databases including CINAHL and British Nursing Index.

- If you are struggling with your information search or an assignment, you can get expert help and advice by contacting one of our information professionals by email or web chat.

- Help with putting together a bibliography.

- Place holds on books, access printed books or request postal book loans at one of our library locations in London, Belfast, Edinburgh or Cardiff.

- More than just books – the RCN library offers online exhibitions, event podcasts, photocopying facilities, printing and free internet access.

For further information visit www.rcn.org.uk/library
Balancing act
Finding it tricky to juggle your degree with your role as a parent? Mother of two Kimberley Winter shares her top tips

1. Address issues early on
   Keep on top of any finance and childcare issues you are having and don’t let problems mount up. Addressing them early on will make the process less stressful. Always let your placement know your circumstances – it is important they are aware so they can help you and be flexible if needs be.

2. Don’t be put off by anybody else
   Don’t give up on your ambitions because you have a family – they can be incorporated within your future career plan. There are a number of support networks available so make sure you access them. You are your own person and there are lots of university staff who can help you address any issues that arise.

3. Use a diary
   Make sure that you incorporate university work with time for the family and chores. Having separate diaries for each may mean you don’t make the relevant time for each. The workload can be immense but if you plan your time well you won’t go too far wrong.

4. Take time out
   Always give yourself a day off. Spending time with your family will help to keep you going.

5. Remain focused
   Keep your mind on the end point and remind yourself why you started nursing in the first place.

Download Moneysmart from www.rcn.org.uk/moneysmart. It’s the RCN’s complete guide to student finance where you will find advice on bursaries, benefits available to you and housing advice.

Claire Cannings, RCN Welfare Adviser, says:
“If you’re struggling with your finances or juggling your work and home life, your university will have a welfare adviser who you should be able to discuss your issues with. Don’t let problems build up. Get in touch with your university’s student services department to access support including counselling and money advice services.”
The perfect CV

Whatever stage you’re at, it’s never too soon to start creating your CV. Cathy Taylor, RCN Careers Adviser, highlights how

While many jobs simply ask that you complete an application form, it’s also useful to create a CV that you can add to your portfolio to present to prospective employers. Successful CVs are logical, accurate, concise and tailored to the people reading them. Key areas to include are:

Personal details
Name, address, contact details.

Opening statement
Provide a couple of sentences that summarise your personal and professional qualities and career objectives. You can include a bullet point list of three or four key achievements under this.

Employment/experience
Working backwards, list the placements you have undertaken while training, with dates and names of employers. Describe what you’ve achieved and the skills you gained, giving specific evidence of your competences.

Education
Provide the dates you attended and names of your school (only if recently at school), college and university. Work backwards chronologically and highlight the qualifications gained and any special achievements.

Professional activities
Summarise details of things such as events and training days you’ve attended, membership of professional bodies, and any student union or RCN activities.

Other activities
You may want to include extra information about your interests outside work and whether you hold a driving licence.

CV tips

- Use “action” words to bring your application to life.
- Explain gaps in paid employment prior to nurse education; for example to raise a family, go travelling or care for a relative – remember that these are responsible reasons that bring extra skills and experience.
- Think about any achievements you’ve gained through voluntary work.
- Use numbers and facts to create an impact.
- Don’t exceed two pages and avoid using too many font styles or abbreviations.
- Inclusion of contact details for referees is optional. Add them if you’re happy for them to be contacted.
- If targeting the CV at potential employers, enclose a covering letter.
- Get at least two people to proof read your CV for errors and ask for constructive feedback.

For careers advice, call 0345 772 6100 or visit www.rcn.org.uk/mss
Here to help
Struggling with a professional dilemma, problem at work or placement issue? RCN Direct is available 365 days a year

It’s good to talk

If you’re facing tough times at work or university, it can be tricky to know where to start. RCN Direct offers a telephone advice service for student members, providing support with a range of employment, placement and professional issues. Advisers are available 8.30am-8.30pm on 0345 772 6100.

Advice at your fingertips

RCN Direct also provides advice online, through a fully searchable A-Z list of 100-plus topics. The advice is based on what members ask about most often and will help you decide what to do next. Find it online at www.rcn.org.uk/advice (you will need your membership number). You can also email a question to web.enquiries@rcn.org.uk

Taking it with you

It can be useful to have something in writing to refer to if you’re dealing with a challenging situation. At www.rcn.org.uk/guides you can access and print a range of downloadable advice guides – particularly handy when you’re on the move and don’t have easy access to a computer.

Connecting you

If a problem arises, you may need support from a number of different RCN services. RCN Direct advisers can link you up with other parts of the RCN such as your local RCN office, along with RCN welfare and counselling teams.

Supporting Emma

Second year nursing student Emma works as a health care assistant alongside her studies and was experiencing bullying from a more senior colleague. It was difficult for Emma to find time during the working day to talk about her concerns, so she called RCN Direct on a Sunday morning. An adviser was able to give Emma advice over the phone about the options she had to try to resolve the situation, sending her a copy of the RCN Direct Bullying and Harassment Advice Guide. This helped Emma get to grips with what had been happening to her and she started building a diary of evidence. RCN Direct also put Emma in touch with her local RCN office for support from a representative.
Your RCN Students Committee
Helping to shape the nursing education agenda

STUDENT MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Brendan Garry (Committee Chair)  
Sylvia Duval

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Lisa Mickleburgh (Committee Vice Chair)  
Eastern  
Emily Gartshore  
East Midlands  
Hannah Doyle  
London  
Vacant  
Nominations open in June  
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North West  
Graeme Stokes  
South East  
Rebecca Richards  
South West  
David Morgan  
West Midlands

Rhys Mood  
Yorkshire & The Humber

Lana Cook  
Northern Ireland

Conor McElwee  
Northern Ireland

Grant Byrne  
Scotland

Katie Douglas  
Scotland

Kieran Mahoney  
Wales

Suzannah Wilton-Baker  
Wales

Contact your representative via students@rcn.org.uk  
Visit www.rcn.org.uk/studentscommittee

In elections opening during RCN Congress, students can stand as a student member of Council or for a seat on the Students Committee.
Share your views and you could win an iPad mini!

Please fill in the survey below or online at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/rcnstudentsmagazinesurvey to tell us what you think about RCN Students magazine. The RCN is passionate about communicating with its student members and wants to make sure its communications are useful, informative and relevant.

1. On first impressions do you like the magazine?
   - Yes  [ ]  No  [ ]

2. Do you find it useful?
   - Yes  [ ]  No  [ ]

3. What is your overall impression of the content?
   - Poor  [ ]  Average  [ ]  Good  [ ]  Excellent  [ ]
   How would you improve the content?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. What is your overall impression of the design?
   - Poor  [ ]  Average  [ ]  Good  [ ]  Excellent  [ ]
   How would you improve the design?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. Does the magazine help you learn more about the RCN and its services?
   - Yes  [ ]  No  [ ]

6. How would you prefer to receive your copy?
   - In the post  [ ]  By email  [ ]

7. How often should it be sent? (select one)
   - Once a year  [ ]
   - Twice a year (current frequency)  [ ]
   - Quarterly  [ ]

8. Any other comments or suggestions for future topics?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Your details

If you would like to enter the prize draw with a chance to win an iPad mini, please supply:
Name: ____________________________________________________________
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Address: _________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
Email address: ____________________________________________________
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Membership number: _____________________________________________
(Only RCN members are eligible for the prize draw)

Not a member?
Join at www.rcn.org.uk/join

Your personal information will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw.

The survey closes on 9 August 2015.

Return your survey to:
Sophie Lowthian, Royal College of Nursing,
20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN,
or fill it in online, and find full terms and conditions at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/rcnstudentsmagazinesurvey

The winner will be notified by 31 August 2015.

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary